LONDON COMEDY AND TWO NATIVE PLAYS DUE THIS WEEK

THE PLAYS OF THE WEEK.

MONDAY—Empire Theatre—Cyril Maude in "The Basker."
Thirty-ninth Street Theatre—Emma Dunn in "Old Lady 31."
Lyceum Theatre—"Backfire," transferred from the Thirty-ninth Street Theatre.
TUESDAY—The Republic Theatre—"Good Gracious Annabelle," by by Clare Kummer.
WEDNESDAY—Irving Place Theatre—"Der Gatte des Fraulein" ("The Spinster's Husband"), postponed from last week.

By LAWRENCE REAMER.

WHEN Alice Duer Miller wrote "Come Out of the Kitchen" she supplied an idea of great value to the playwright who happened to be in the event of the matter, the expert and witty A. E. Thomas, who was able to convert Mrs. Miller's book into a very serviceable and entertaining medium for Ruth Chatterton. Mr. Thomas's personal contribution to the fiction in this work seems to be confined to the opening scene, in which the children of the Virginia family decide to remain as servants in their home rather than risk the chance of losing the rent which their ailing father needs so badly. These opening passages must have been quite indispensable, since they put the spectators in possession of the hypothesis on which the play is founded.

Nervous visitors found the long second act of the new piece at the Cohan Theatre on Monday rather too long for the slender dramatic interest which it develops. The scenes, to be sure, have their lengths, but there is almost continuous entertainment. Miss Chatterton seems to control little variety in her dramatic methods, and the author was therefore strictly limited as to the problems which could be put before her. There is an inevitable sameness in everything she is called upon to do. For spectators who do not entertain high ideals of contemporaneous drama or acting, however, the second act of "Come Out of the Kitchen" scene seems well above the average output of the theatre to-day.

Mrs. Miller's invaluable contribution to the success of the new play lies in the idea of the mistress of the house being considered one of the servants. With this misunderstanding every word that is spoken by the characters in the play has its value. When the maid is called insolent by the purseproud matron in the house and accused of stealing her daughter's hat by this same gentlewoman there is just as much amusement for the audience, which is in the secret, as there is when the butler—by long odds the best behaved of the domestic staff—describes his younger brother as a decrepit and deaf old man. And every one of these amusing scenes is the result of Mrs. Miller's ingenious use of the mistake concerning the identity of the well trained servants in the Virginia household.

It is on such sound theatre premises that good plays are founded. It is not the least an argument against the device that Goldsmith built "She Stoops to Conquer" on this dramatic shibboleth and that the first act of "The Shaughraun"—a notable first act, by the way—derives its value from just the same posture of circumstances.

If Langdon Mitchell had been helped by any such means in "Major Pendennis" there might have been some more stirring dramatic minutes in his play than there are at present. There was everything in "Vanity Fair" to help the playwright. The character of *Becky Sharp* was in itself the perfect nucleus for a drama. The spectators in the audience know what a jade and impostor she was. The characters on the other side of the footlights took her at her own valuation. She was always an impostor toward them. But the real creature had been shown to the public and every act of hers was of certain dramatic value. There is nothing of the kind in the character of the major. He is known to the audience to be just what he appears to the characters in the play. So there was no help for Mr. Mitchell in the way that the central figure of "Vanity Fair" turned out to be.

The play at the Criterion Theatre might have been written more with an eye to that large and growing section of theatregoers who are ignorant of the Thackeray novel. Only the lovers of the author and specifically of "Major Pendennis" will be interested or indeed be able to form a coherent idea of the story, although the excellent acting of John Drew will attract all fond of the best and most artistic that there is in contemporary histrionism. The "feeling" of the piece is faithful to the original and admirably sustained by the acting as well as the frame which encloses the scenes.

When the firm of "Potash and Perlmutter" first began to make friends in the theatre it was the delightfully human quality of these men and women that endeared them to the public. The two partners were a delight. They have been laughed at, but they never would have taken a firm hold on the public affections had not there been honesty and kindness among them. The very best scene in all the "Potash and Perlmutter" drama, and one of the best scenes supplied to the theatre in many a day from any source came at the close of the third act. The trustful *Potash* has gone on the bond of his daughter's lover and the young man has escaped to Canada, with the resulting ruin to the firm, which has been enabled, through the popularity of the Arverne sack, to move to quarters on Fifth avenue. Of course there is the expected outburst from *Abe*, but when he learns that the bond was put up on account of the daughter's love for the fugitive there is only pity in the heart of the one partner for his friend. R. C. Megrue was the author of this fine scene and its amusing climax.

And all the splendid forgiveness and heart of the man for the father are echoed in the apologetic words:

"Have a Bismarck, *Abe*," as he draws from his pocket his favorite cigar.

It was such moments as this in the first play about the immortal pair that endeared them to the theatregoing public. It was not merely because they were laughable that the two with their friends were so long in the favor of the public. They were lovable in their shrewdness and in their generosity to one another.

But there are unfortunately none of these qualities in "Object—Matrimony," which was seen the other night at the Cohan & Harris Theatre. In that brewing from the old leaves the heroine deliberately plans a betrothal and abandonment in order that her lover may reap the benefit of the financial repute that comes from his engagement to a rich man. The girl is of course made the innocent victim of this plot, which she has not in the least deserved, merely because she happens to eat and grow fat and possesses a father eager to find a husband for her. Of course for a hero who allows himself to be placed in such a light and for a heroine who contrives it there can be no sympathy. Indeed, there is scarcely tolerance.

So in place of the business honesty and the warm humanity of the earlier cycles of the "Potash and Perlmutter" saga, there is such a trick as the betrothal to raise sufficient money to pay the debts of the business. If there was a play with such characteristics in its two leading figures ever won the favor of the public, it is unknown to the writer. Out of the present play of Jewish life at the Cohan & Harris Theatre there survives only the vulgarity that was in a greater or less degree to be found in all of them.

Death as the subject of farce was inevitably suggested by the production of "Go to It" at the Princess Theatre since the piece is a new version of "A Milk White Flag," by Charles Hoyt. It happens that this play enjoyed a comparatively brief term of popularity because American audiences will not laugh over death as the suggestion of a comic play even when it is only a pretended death. Of course it is all make believe in "Go to It." But all the outward and visible signs of a death are supplied by the mourning, the flowers and the undertakers.

There have been of course plays in which death has served a comic purpose. One has laughed at the revelation of character under the influence of death. In Adolphe Belot's "Le Testement de Cesar Godelot," which is now the oldest of those dramas, it is possible to be ironically amused at the talk of the characters. In "Les Corbeaux," by Edmond Pailleron, there is some incitement to grim humor in the scramble for the money that should go to the widow and the orphans. Clyde Fitch had similar amusement in the first act of "The Climbers" and the same kind of enjoyment is to be had from Pinero's "The Thunderbolt," which derives so plainly from Belot's play.

But in all these cases the humor to be found in the consequences of death was ironic and contemplative and the result of death in developing the traits either good or bad of a human character. But to use death as the means of causing constant laughter in a musical play, alternating London taxis and widows in their weeds, syncopation and pallbearers, is to attempt a difficult task. But come to think of it, the first act of "Go to It" was about as destitute of humor to-day as the second and there was not a suggestion of death in it until five minutes before the curtain fell. So it may be merely that the tooth of time has bitten too deeply into "A Milk White Flag" to make it possible anyway.

THE WEEK'S CHANGES.

The Standard Theatre will present "Very Good, Eddie" to the public of the middle upper West Side this week.

The Bronx Opera House will have "The Cinderella Man" as its attraction for the North Side public this week. There is the cast from the Hudson Theatre.

WHERE TO DANCE.

FROLIC—The new edition of the Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic is now in the fifth week of its popularity on the roof of the New Amsterdam Theatre. Claudius and Scarlet are the latest additions, with their novel offering of old songs.

THE BULL RING—The nocturnal resort at Castles in the Air with its Spanish environment is growing in popularity nightly. No admission is charged now. The entertainers include Eduardo and Elisa Cansino, Spanish dancers; Luana, Philippine dancer; Hugo Jansen and his models and Patsie O'Hearn.

REISENWEBER'S — All the superstitions of Halloween will be in evidence at Reisenweber's at Columbus Circle on Tuesday night. Lilia, the Hawaiian dancer, will furnish a South Sea Islands "Ghost Dance" for the occasion. Ortille Preetorius will introduce a Babylonian "Dance of Death."

SHELBURNE — Bobbing for apples, shadow dances, mirrow reflections and all the other Halloween customs will be observed at the Shelburne in addition to a surprise dance, with prizes.

MURRAY'S — "The Cascade Fantasie" is the entertainment given nightly at the Forty-second street restaurant. Peg Rafferty and Gil Wells, supported by members of the Metropolitan Opera Ballet, are the principal entertainers.

NEW PLAYS OF THE WEEK.

Novelties of Various Kinds to Be Presented in the Theatres.

Two plays of native origin and a London importation are the novelties which the theatre managers have prepared for the present week. One can only hope for the best. To-morrow night there will be two openings.

Cyril Maude is at the Empire Theatre in a modern comedy entitled "The Basker."

"The Basker" is of English origin, its author Clifford Mills. Produced in London a year ago, George Alexander appeared in the part that Mr. Maude will create in this country. The comedy is in four acts and has for its central figure *George De Lacorfe*, an Englishman of 40, a happy inoffensive idler, whose chief ambition is to bask in the sunshine of life, making friends of all and enemies of none, and above all to be permitted to follow his own harmless inclinations. Unfortunately for the peace of mind of one of his temperament *De Lacorfe* is in direct line to inherit a title, and when this distinction suddenly comes to him he resorts to a most unusual method to avoid assuming the rank that has been thrust upon him against his will. His efforts to transfer the title and its obligations to another member of his family and the unexpected developments resulting make the plot of the play. While written in a comedy vein, "The Basker" will reveal dramatic situations that promise to supply the fillip which present day audiences seek in theatrical entertainment. The action of the play takes place in England at a time previous to the present war.

For his support in "The Basker" Mr. Maude has assembled a particularly well known group of players including Muriel Martin Harvey, Maud Milton, Marguerite Leslie, Cynthia Brooks, Madeleine Meredith, Alice Gordon, Florence Le Clercq, Hassard Short, Frank Kingdon, Edgar Norton, Edward Lester and James Kearney.

Beginning Monday also Lee Kugel will present at the Thirty-ninth Street Theatre Emma Dunn as the star in Rachel Crothers's new comedy, "Old Lady 31." The play was suggested by Louise Forsslund's novel "Old Lady 31." It is in three acts and a prologue with the scenes laid in a village on the New England coast. The period of the play is in the '70s.

It is a love story of old people and young people for young people and old people. It plays upon the foibles of womankind—their little tricks of mind—and heart—their little vanities, their weakness, and above all their generosities and sentimentality.

The story concerns mainly Capt. Abe Rose and his wife, Angie, who have been compelled to leave their home and seek places in institutions to end their days. With the little money they have left he insists on sending her to the more comfortable place of the old ladies home, whereas he intends to go to the poor farm. When he takes her to the home the inmates decide to take him in too and he accepts and is facetiously called "Old Lady 31." From this situation emanates the comedy in the play.

Immediately upon taking his residence in the home Abe becomes the hero to all of the thirty inmates. Their attentions flatter him very much and he in turn makes much of them. Abe unfortunately displays a little more interest in Blossy, the youngest member of the home, than in the others, and this arouses a tempest in the domestic teapot. Where before each of the "ladies" had tried to outdo the other in being kind to him they now turn and insist that he leave the home. Angie, his wife, fearing separation, arranges a hasty marriage between Blossy, who has caused all the trouble, and Capt. Darby, a sweetheart of thirty years standing, and in this way brings order out of chaos.

Running parallel to the romance of the old people is the love story of a young boy and girl. She is the daughter of the rich man of the village and he a young man who does odd jobs around the home. Through a sudden shift of fortune Capt. Rose and his wife are given a slight degree of independence, and they take it upon themselves not alone to make the ladies of the home happy but render it possible for the young folks to go down the road of life hand in hand.

Miss Dunn, whose characterization in "Mother," "Sinners" and "The Governor's Lady" has given her a unique position on the American stage in portraying old ladies, is said to have a role that affords her unlimited opportunities to display deftness of touch and general skill in characterization.

Reginald Barlow is cast for *Capt. Rose*. Others prominent in the company are Vivia Ogden, Mrs. Felix Morris, Maud Sinclair, Anna Bates, May Galyer, Marie Carroll, Stuart Sage, Louis Pierce, John B. Maher, Elizabeth Le Roy, Lottie Church and Mary Davis.

On Tuesday at the Republic Theatre Arthur Hopkins will present "Good Gracious Annabelle," a new play by Clare Kummer. The piece has just closed a successful engagement in Boston.

Heading the cast are Lola Fisher, who played the leading part last season in "Rio Grande"; May Vokes, who is identified with the "slavey" type which she has created; Edwin Nicander, long associated with the Frohman stars and recently seen here in "The Fear Market"; Walter Hampden, who took the leading part last season in "Just a Woman," and Helen Lee, Ruth Harding, J. Palmer Collins, Roland Young, Edwin Holland, Walter Schiellin and others.

The play tells the whimsical adventures of little *Annabelle* searching for her lost bank account and husband. Arthur Hopkins produced the piece, and Robert Edmond Jones, whose settings and costumes for the Russian Ballet were seen last Monday, designed the scenery.

THE PLAYS THAT LAST.

List Seems Limited Only by Number of Available Theatres.

The plays that continue in New York are "Seven Chances" at the Belasco Theatre, "Cheating Cheaters" at the Eltinge Theatre, "Turn to the Right" at the Gaiety Theatre, "The Big Show" at the Hippodrome, "The Flame" at the Forty-fourth Street Theatre, "Pierrot the Prodigal" at the Booth Theatre, "Nothing But the Truth" at the Longacre Theatre, "The Man Who Came Back" at the Playhouse, "Pollyanna" at the Hudson Theatre, "Arms and the Girl" at the Fulton Theatre, "Upstairs and Down" at the Cort Theatre, "His Majesty Bunker Bean" at the Astor Theatre, "Rich Man, Poor Man" at the Forty-eighth Street Theatre, "Backfire" at the Lyceum Theatre, "Under Sentence" at the Harris Theatre, "Fixing Sister" at the Maxine Elliott Theatre, "Hush" at the Little Theatre, "The Music Master" at the Knickerbocker Theatre, "Treasure Island" at the Punch and Judy Theatre, "Come Out of the Kitchen" at the Cohan Theatre, "Object—Matrimony" at the Cohan and Harris Theatre, "Major Pendennis" at the Criterion Theatre and the Washington Square Players at the Comedy Theatre.

The musical plays which are still on view include "Flora Bella" at the Casino Theatre, "Miss Springtime" at the New Amsterdam Theatre, "Betty" at the Globe Theatre, "Le Poilu" at the Garrick Theatre, "So Long Letty" at the Shubert Theatre, "Go To It" at the Princess Theatre and "The Show of Wonders" at the Winter Garden.

The photo play spectacles which continue are: "Intolerance" at the Liberty Theatre, "A Daughter of the Gods" at the Lyric Theatre and "The Masque of Life" at the Park Theatre.

HOW WARFIELD PLAYS "OLD MEN."

Disclosure From This Famous Actor on the Subject.

It will come as a shock to many theatregoers to know that David Warfield, who has made such a wonderful success in the playing of old men roles on the stage, declares there is no art in doing so. Frequently he is asked about his method of preparing for these roles and as to whether he makes a special study of old men in real life to aid in his portrayals, and he is forced to confess he hasn't any.

In response to the question as to whether it is hard to play this line of parts, Mr. Warfield, who is nightly delighting huge audiences with his wonderful portrayal of the lovable old music teacher in "The Music Master," declares it is not hard to anybody who is trying.

"Let him keep on," he says. "That is the only way in which a player can discover if he has the gift. Even though he has not the light of that divine spark which makes the difference between a good player and a great master, he may, at any rate become a pretty good actor.

"To differentiate the character from himself," declares Mr. Warfield, "is the real problem that confronts an old actor in playing the role of an old man, a straight, modern role of about his own age or a character only a little older. If he succeeds in doing this it may be that there is something of self-hypnosis in it. I only suggest this since the thing is beyond explanation anyway.

"While I strongly believe in the force of one's mental will power, and I try in that way to enter into and become the sort of man I think my character is, yet I never go through any form to hypnotize myself, nor do I know how it can be done or whether it can be done. Just how I succeed in entering into the conception of an old man and creating the illusion of one I certainly do not know. I am entirely unconscious of any special methods.

"I have never conscientiously made a study of old age. At least, I don't think I have ever taken more notice of the peculiar characteristics of age than everybody ordinarily does, and I don't think that I know them better than others."

THE CANSINOS OF THE DANCE.

They Supply Local Color at "The Bull Ring."

Elisa and Eduardo Cansino, the sensational Spanish dancers who are appearing in "The Bull Ring" at Castles in the Air, atop the Forty-fourth Street Theatre, are the children of that famous Sevillian dancing teacher, Antonio Cansino, who for many years has conducted a well known dancing school in Madrid. While at a tender age, they were discovered in Andalusia, Seville, and taken to the Spanish capital to dance at the Court of King Alfonso XIII.

There they, in turn, were discovered by Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish, who brought them to this country in the summer of 1912 to dance before Newport society. Their success was so instantaneous that Martin Beck engaged them for vaudeville and last season they achieved a remarkable triumph as headliners over the Orpheum circuit.

Among the novelties which they are exploiting in "The Bull Ring" is "The Malaquena and Bolero," the dance of victory. This dance originated in Malaga in celebration of the successful killing of the bull and is still performed in the Spanish countryside. Cleverly played castanets rhythmically accompany the evolutions of the dance.

With fidelity to detail the Cansinos also present other dances that are a part of the national life of Spain and Latin America and Spanish dancing, as most every one knows, is a particularly exact art. The technique of the Russian ballet and of the French classic dance, kept inviolate by academies that exist for no other purpose, is no more rigid and invariable than that of the Spanish dance. The acquirement of proficiency such as the Cansinos show is not a matter of a couple of expensive half-hours under the guidance of an Iberian master. These dancers have been at it all their lives, and then remember they had a dancing ancestry.

Like all Spanish dancers who cling to the traditions of their school, the Cansinos do no work on the points of the toes—the essential characteristic of the French style. This is not because they would find it difficult to master the technique of this particular step, but rather that the Spanish tradition does not recognize it.

The average person's idea of Spanish dancing is usually expressed in terms of the castanets. As a matter of fact, castanets are used in only a few of Spain's dances, and those of the more stately and classical forms, which depend for effect more on arm than foot motions. As they take their dancing seriously, the Cansinos have never attempted to gain local color at the expense of truth to detail.

ON CASTING PLAYS.

George C. Tyler Explains This Important Process.

Picking a cast for a play like "Pollyanna," which is a dramatization of a best seller, is one of the hardest tasks a theatrical producer is called upon to perform, according to George C. Tyler, the "man behind" that particular piece.

"Casting an ordinary play properly is difficult enough," said Mr. Tyler the other day, "but when it comes to selecting players for the dramatization of a story which has sold into the hundreds of thousands you are up against a mighty troublesome proposition, one that will give you many a wakeful night if you're of the worrying kind.

"The thing that stares you in the face constantly is the realization that myriads of prospective theatregoers know all about your characters already, and that their imaginations, helped out by the author's elaborate descriptions, have made living realities of them. You can scarcely hope to realize all the ideas of these readers, but you've got to come pretty close to it or you're going to have thousands of tremendously disappointed patrons whose interest is going to lag and whose enthusiasm is going to wane the minute your curtain goes up on the first act.

"In the case of the ordinary play the description furnished you by the author is usually very concise and it is not generally overburdened with details. 'Enter Helen,' it may read. 'She is a charming girl of 22.' Now, charming girls of 22 are not uncommon on the stage. There are generally two or three of them sitting in my other office waiting to be told that I'm sorry, but 'there isn't any opening just now.' When Helen is finally chosen and when she walks on the stage she faces a group of spectators who have no preconceived notions about her that may interfere with her efforts to make a real person out of the young lady in their eyes.

"But if 300 or 400 persons in the audience know everything about her as they know about 'Pollyanna' it is going to be extremely difficult for her to make good if she doesn't live up to the author's detailed descriptions the moment she first steps on the stage. There's going to be a buzz of dissatisfaction all over the house and its echoes are going to be heard next day in a hundred and one places where it will do great injury.

"The name of Patricia Collinge, who created *Pollyanna*, and who is now playing her, was suggested to me one afternoon by Mrs. Cushing, the author of the play, at a moment when I was literally at my wit's end. I had been working on the problem of selection for days. Her name did not appear on the memorandum I had been so carefully studying. This had been prepared for me by our general stage director after every available source of information had been ransacked for the names of possibilities—dramatic agencies, his own memory, his precious book of marked theatrical programmes and so forth. I had added to this list a number of tentative suggestions, but somehow none of them seemed just right. We had interviewed two dozen or more prospective candidates, but none of them seemed capable of realizing *Pollyanna*. You see I had steeped myself in the story, and I had my own particular idea of what that young person must look like and act like.

"Just how Miss Collinge came to be forgotten until then will always remain a mystery. The dramatic agencies say she didn't appear on their lists because they thought her under contract. She had earned a reputation for herself as one of the most charming ingenues on the American stage, and her name should have been one of the first on the list, but it wasn't. The memorandum went into the waste basket during our first interview. The half timid little way she slipped into my office in response to a telephone call, her perfect self-reliance when she began to speak, the quaint manner in which she unconsciously curled herself up in the big, easy chair alongside my desk, the little note of tenderness in her voice—all these and many other things convinced me that here was *Pollyanna* in the life, and that we need go no further. And we didn't. Patricia Collinge is *Pollyanna* and *Pollyanna* is Patricia Collinge."

THE CENTURY CHORUS GIRL.

She Must Be a Fine and Unique Product.

With Hazel Lewis, called by Raphael Kirchner "the most perfect chorus girl in the world," at one end of the line, and the Honorable Helen Scott-Montagu, daughter of a British peer, at the other end, the chorus of "The Century Girl," which is to be revealed to the world on Thursday evening, Nov. 2, promises to rival in interest and discussion the long list of stars whom Charles Dillingham and Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr., will present on that occasion at the Century Theatre. As a matter of fact, never in the history of theatricals will so much time, labor, money and painstaking care have been expended upon this feature of a production.

To recruit the sixty young women composing the several ensembles of "The Century Girl" has required months of patient and vigilant endeavor on the part not only of the Dillingham-Ziegfeld agents in this country and in England but the personal attention and supervision of those managers themselves. It has long been a truism with Mr. Dillingham and Mr. Ziegfeld as individual managers that the worth of a musical production is never greater than the face value of its least important chorister, with the result that the "Dillingham Chorus" and the "Ziegfeld Girls" have become established institutions.

"The Century Girls," as the chorus of the big playhouse in Central Park West is destined to be known, represent the beauties culled from Mr. Dillingham's and Mr. Ziegfeld's companies, supplemented by a large number of young women for whom their appearance in "The Century Girls" will be in the nature of a debut, as well as several well-known London stage favorites from the Gaiety and Alhambra theatres. The qualifications for admission to the Century chorus were prohibitive to hundreds of young women who would find no difficulty in getting positions in the chorus of the average musical productions. Not only was the candidate obliged to fill the exacting requirements of Mr. Raphael Kirchner's rarefied ideal of chorus-girl beauty—a beauty which includes an ensemble of face, figure, expression, complexion and muscular grace—but she had to be able to give a satisfactory demonstration of her vocal abilities and of her understanding of what constitutes drawing-room manners.

Quite as important as her ability to sing the tuneful score which Victor Herbert and Irving Berlin have written for "The Century Girl" is the Century chorus girl's knowledge of how one should leave or enter a room. A knowledge which, if the Century chorus girl did not learn it at boarding school, was straightway imparted to her, along with a score or more of similar graces, by the Century Theatre's instructor in deportment, a gentlewoman specially employed for that purpose.

The Elmendorf Lectures.

Dwight Elmendorf, the travel talker, has been to Mexico, has studied and photographed its most representative scenes and has brought back with him many new and interesting facts which will be revealed for the first time at Carnegie Hall on Sunday evening, November 5, when he begins his new season of artistically illustrated travel talks. Other lectures in this course, which is to extend over five Sunday evenings and five Monday afternoons, will be "Days in Spain," "Children and Flowers From Many Lands," "Old German Towns; a Musical Journey," and "The Sahara Desert, a Caravan Journey."